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ABSTRACT

Counseling across cultures can present many problems for the White American counselor. It is important that the counselor understand the subculture in order to meet the needs of minority clients. In dealing with Black Americans, the counselor must consider issues of racism and religion. When working with Mexican-Americans, the counselor must often deal with language difficulties, a client's macho self-image, and the counselor's own class-bound orientation and feeling of superiority. Shame and order present various implications when counseling Japanese-American Counseling of Chinese-Americans must involve an understanding of family ties. Marriage counseling among the Chinese calls for consideration of many distinguishing characteristics of Chinese culture: moderation, place, family, saving face, and spirits and religion. Case studies of marriage counseling with the Chinese illustrate various problem areas in which cultural attitudes play a major role: (1) interdependence versus individualism; (2) the role of the mother-in-law; (3) attitudes toward sex; (4) infidelity; (5) the practice of adopting out children; and (6) beliefs in spells and folk religion. There are striking differences in how such problems are viewed by Eastern and Western cultures. (NRB)

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COUNSELING ACROSS CULTURES

by

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Robert C. Leslie
Berkeley, March 1979

I. CRUCIAL ISSUES WITH FOUR AMERICAN SUBGROUPS

By the year 1990, half of the population in California will be of racial and ethnic minorities.[1] If counselors are really concerned about meeting their clients' needs, it is clear that an understanding of the subcultures out of which minorities come is becoming increasingly important. In this discussion the question to be explored is: What cultural issues are likely to be present when counseling with any given subgroup? Although many groups might be considered, I have chosen to concentrate on four: black Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans.

Black Americans

Black Americans are the "largest and most severely excluded minority in the United States";[2] the single issue that stands out above all others when counseling with black Americans is racism. No matter what other issues may be present, racism is always a concern; no black American can be understood apart from the issue of racism, and no counseling can be effective that does not take racism into account.

Racism is an issue in counseling because it is so closely related to feelings of self-worth. Black Americans tend to adopt toward themselves the same attitudes that the culture holds of them, and since this attitude is generally negative, the results tend to be feelings of self-hatred. Racism has both subjective and objective aspects. Subjectively, racism is found in the perjorative attitude held about black people because they are black. Objectively, racism is found in facts of social power and cultural resources that make negative attitudes real in their consequences, in matters such as housing, unemployment, and longer prison sentences.

Most non-blacks have little appreciation of how all-pervasive the issue of racism is for black Americans. In describing the case of a 23-year-old black male, psychologist Howard Mitchell (who is black) writes: "No matter what the issue in his marriage or his work, it was colored by his defensiveness over his minority group status."[3] In describing life in this man's home, Mitchell writes: "Misbehavior was continually interpreted by his mother in racial terms. When either he or his sister did anything wrong, they were told they were acting according to the white man's stereotype of the Negro."[4] The point is that just as racism influenced virtually every aspect of this man's life, so racism is an all-pervasive element in virtually every black American's life.

Two black psychiatrists writing in 1969, as the Black Power Movement was gaining momentum, called their book *Black Rage*. Their title indicates a basic fact which, as they point out, white Americans seem not to recognize, namely, that "all blacks are angry."[5] The anger is the outgrowth of being powerless. Edward Wimberly speaks to this issue:

> The pervasive influence of racism, segregation, and injustice upon black personality cannot be underestimated. These sinister forces have left their unmistakable imprint. The impact of these forces on the black personality has been evidenced in the black person's belief that he does not possess the power to effect change in his own life and in the lives of others—indeed, that he is powerless. In fact, it is only the rare black person who can escape the feeling of powerlessness.[6]

Wimberly describes a major problem that often develops when a white counselor tries to work with a black counselee. He notes that white counselors seldom sense that black rage can become the "motivational source of change" so that the client can both "experience his own anger" and "use this anger to do what he can to change the circumstances of his own existence."[7] The problem with white counselors is that too often they treat black rage as a projection, a transference phenomenon. Instead of seeing black rage as a real issue to be taken seriously because of injustices actually experienced in a racist culture, the white counselor tends to explain it away as a projection stemming from the client's internal world. Even if white counselors avoid this pitfall, they are so much a part of the problem that it is questionable whether or not they can work effectively with black clients.

Maya Angelou, black singer and writer, tells of a time when she sought help for emotional problems. Her graphic description points up the problem of how difficult it is for anyone who is white to appreciate what life has been like for anyone who is black. As she looked at the white psychiatrist sitting behind his desk, who had asked her, "Are you troubled?" her feelings were as follows:

> Yes, I was troubled; why else would I be here? But could I tell this man? Would he understand Arkansas, which I left, yet would never, could never leave? Would he comprehend why my brilliant brother, who was the genius in our family, was doing time in Sing Sing on a charge of fencing stolen goods instead of sitting with clean fingernails in a tailor-made suit, listening to some poor mad person cry her blues out? How would he perceive a mother who, in a desperate thrust for freedom, left her only child who became sick during her absence? A mother who, upon her return, felt so guilty she could think of nothing more productive than killing herself and possibly even the child? . . . No, I couldn't tell him about living inside a skin that was hated or feared by the majority of one's fellow citizens or about the sensation of getting on a bus on a lovely morning, feeling happy, and suddenly seeing the passengers curl their lips in distaste or avert their eyes in revulsion. No, I had nothing to say to the doctor.[8]

So she thanked him and left without saying anything more.

For Maya Angelou, the color of the therapist was a major concern. Franklin McDonald points out how easy it is for a white counselor to see life patterns of blacks as deviations from the "normal." He is writing about a black woman whom he, a black therapist, was treating: "She was apparently at ease with the therapist, feeling that her colloquialisms, profanity, and unusual behavior were understood in

terms of her sociocultural matrix and not merely as personal deviations from normality."[9]

In spite of all such problems, it is true that many black clients have been helped by white therapists, usually in a relationship in which the difference in color has been lifted up as a topic for discussion. Wimberly comments from his perspective as a black counselor: "A willingness to treat racial issues as racial issues often frees the black client to get to the real reason he or she came for counseling." He goes on to say, "The white therapist could explore with the black client what it feels like to be in a relationship with a white person."[10]

A second important issue in counseling with black Americans is the place of religion in their lives. When Maya Angelou left the white psychiatrist, she went directly to an old friend, a singing teacher who was black. He held her in a warm embrace, gave her a stiff drink, and then sat her down at his desk and had her write down what she had to be thankful for. He started her off with the fact that she was able to hear what he told her to do, and that she could speak well enough to have directed the taxi to his studio. After she had completed her list, and had discovered how much she really had going for herself, he sent her to a theatrical agency to apply for a job. Walking to the door with his arm around her, he said, "Let Uncle Wilkie tell you one last thing. Don't ask God to forgive you, for that's already done. Forgive yourself."[11]

For Uncle Wilkie to draw upon a religious resource was as natural for him as a black as it would have been unnatural for the white psychiatrist. Religion and the institutional church are vital parts of the heritage of most black Americans. Wimberly notes how the black church historically has been the only institution in black American society to provide for the fulfillment of the "political, educational, recreational, economic, and social needs."[12]

The black minister has traditionally played an important part in the lives of his parishioners. Effective counseling as done by black clergy seldom follows orthodox psychotherapeutic patterns but instead moves directly with positive action in ways that demonstrate concern and caring. One black therapist, moving along these lines, tells of an unconventional structure he set up to work with a black client:

> Since the patient had to commute more than twenty-five miles by bus for her weekly appointments, which were paid for out of her meagre public assistance allowance, an alternative to the conventional interview was arranged. She was permitted to telephone her therapist once a week and at any other time she felt the need or had a "mad headache" coming on.[13]

This therapist was not a minister, but he was acting as a black minister customarily would.

A community mental health clinic in Philadelphia experimented with using black ministers as indigenous therapists. They brought in a black storefront clergyman from the ghetto to assist them when their efforts had failed in reaching the lay leader from the minister's church who had been hospitalized after a serious suicidal attempt. Their report reads as follows:

> The usual approaches of individual and group psychotherapy seemed pointless with this man, who neither appreciated nor respected "all this talk-stuff." When allowed, the black clergyman moved in with some very direct intervention. He had discovered that the man's two teen-age daughters were pregnant by him and that there was some community knowledge of this fact. He said his goal with the man was to give him a choice whether he would live or die. Right now, he said, the man will have to die. After having first arranged abortions for the two girls, he brought the layman in front of the congregation and asked the congregation: "Should he die?" The congregation responded in a booming voice: "No." The clergyman repeated the question, and the congregation echoed its response. The clergyman then directed the congregation toward a healing ministry to the man and his family but with a heavy emphasis on the man's "sin."[14]

Unorthodox though the method was, the clergyman intervened effectively, made good use of the resources of the religious community, and gave the parishioner a new lease on life. The kind of resistance seen in the parishioner to "all this talk stuff" is a useful hint toward developing more directive methods for counseling many black Americans.

Black ministers in the American culture are often seen as effective agents for social change. It is not by chance that Martin Luther King, Jr., was a minister. Black congregations expect their ministers to be active in community life, to see pastoral concern reflected in involvement in social justice. Change is not a matter solely of personal or social transformation, but is a combination of the two. Indeed, the acceptability of the white counselor for black Americans may depend on the degree to which the counselor is involved on the social scene.

Mexican Americans

Language is a central issue in counseling with Mexican Americans, commonly called Chicanos. They contrast themselves with Anglos, i.e., the English-speaking majority; it is language which accents the differences between the two groups, and it is language which affirms the unique cultural heritage of each group. It is often the misuse of language which complicates communication between the two groups. For counselors who cannot speak Spanish, counseling with Chicanos is a major problem.

Language is much more than simply learning a vocabulary. As L.M. Barna points out, "Knowing a little of a foreign language may allow one only to make a 'fluent fool' of oneself if one is unaware of the implicit meanings behind highly subtle linguistic symbols."[15] Moreover, the nuances of colloquial expressions, so often lost when language facility is limited to classroom learning, convey considerably more meaning than any literal translation might suggest. And the nonverbal "language" of gestures and posture further complicate the picture, as Paul Pedersen points out:

> It is difficult to recognize the unspoken codes that are utilized so automatically in a given culture that they may not even be consciously recognized by members of that

culture. Such codes communicate definite feelings or attitudes which may emphasize, harden, soften, or contradict the spoken messages.[16]

Feeling tones are best conveyed in one's own language.

For Chicanos, the Spanish they use represents more than just a language. It suggests to them their heritage which has its roots in the Spanish settlers who came to the New World considerably earlier than the ancestors of the Anglos. When the Anglo-Saxons migrated from the East Coast to the Southwest, the Chicanos were already there, long-time inhabitants who were proud of their heritage. Although the roots of Spanish-speaking people are diverse, with some going way back to Spaniards in the old country, others going back to Mexicans, and others going back to indigenous Indians, there is a common core of culture expressed in religion, music, foods, customs, and values, and identified by language. The identity of the Mexican American is bound up in the Spanish language.

Virtually all Chicanos are bicultural. Even though they may have been educated in English and may be as fluent in English as they are in Spanish, it is commonplace for Spanish to be the language used at home. Madsen notes how language makes for a schizophrenic-like existence for many Chicanos: "During working hours these Chicanos [in white-collar positions] must act like Anglos. Upon returning home from work, the Chicanos switch from English to Spanish and operate by Mexican-American values and customs."[17] Although the use of Spanish at home is partly in order to communicate with the older generation, it is also a withdrawal from the Anglo culture which has consistently looked down on Mexican origins.

To be sure, some Chicanos have adapted themselves to mainstream white culture and have adjusted themselves to white middle-class culture. For such persons, however, a real crisis of cultural identity is often present.

The identification of Chicanos with a common Hispanic heritage is expressed in the Spanish term *La Raza*. William Madsen defines it thus: "*La Raza* is literally translated as 'the race' and refers to all those of Latin descent who are bound together by a common spirituality and fate."[18] Most Chicanos think of themselves as loyal members of *La Raza*. Madsen goes on to say that "the Mexican American usually classifies himself first as a member of *La Raza* and secondly as a United States citizen." Pride in *La Raza* is accompanied by a sense of shame when a particular kind of behavior brings discredit to the Chicano community.

> The Chicano, as a lifetime member of a tradition-oriented family and of La Raza, thinks of a deviant act primarily in terms of how it will shame him in the eyes of others. . . . The Texas Anglo thinks primarily in terms of self-righteousness, while the Chicano thinks in terms of traditional rightness as viewed by others.

Madsen goes on to note the consequences of this emphasis on shame when the Mexican American deals with an Anglo-American: "When the Chicano is operating in an Anglo group, he tries to show no sign of Mexican behavior for fear of shaming himself in the eyes of Anglos who disapprove of Mexican ways."[19]

The way of life of *La Raza* contradicts the perspective of Anglos at many points. For example, Chicanos and Anglos view success and failure in quite different ways. The ego involvement of the typical Anglo is not nearly as pronounced among Chicanos. Horace Peak puts it graphically: "Work for them [Chicanos] is not so apt to be an end in itself or even a means to an end; rather, it is the lot of man, and they do only as much of it as is necessary."[20] The result is that the Chicano philosophy is commonly misinterpreted by Anglos, who tend to see Mexican Americans as lazy and unambitious or, at best, indifferent. In actual fact, the Chicano philosophy is neither better nor worse, simply different. For the Chicano, adjusting to difficulties seems more appropriate than trying to overcome them. In their dependency on others in their community, in their passive or docile reactions to authority, in their inactivity in sickness (sometimes fatal), Chicanos personify an outlook on life that is alien to most Anglos. Obviously, all of these philosophical differences become important when Anglos attempt to counsel Chicanos.

A second concern when working with Chicanos is the *macho* self-image of the Hispanic male. Clemmont Vontress describes the meaning of this term:

> When counseling with the Hispanic male, it is important to understand the meaning of *machismo*, which refers to one's manhood, the manly traits of honor and dignity, to the courage to fight, to keeping one's honor, and to protecting one's name. . . . It also refers to a man's running his home, controlling his women, and directing his children.[21]

The Chicano male proves his manliness, his *machismo*, through sexual exploits, through acts of physical strength, and through courageous endurance of pain, whereas his Anglo counterpart is more likely to prove his worth through economic success. For the Chicano male, extra-marital exploits are expected and accepted as a part of the macho image. Georgene Seward tells of a young Mexican American who lost a finger in an industrial accident. In the court case which followed, it was argued that the patient was overreacting, that his feeling of shame and withdrawal from women was out of proportion to the actual loss. The attorney for the worker, however, won his case which he based on the symbolic significance of the loss of a finger as a castration resulting in the loss of the much prized macho self-image.[22]

The correlative of the macho orientation is the submissive and greatly regulated role assigned in the Chicano culture to women. Unlike the Anglo culture, the Chicano culture very clearly defines the roles of men and women, with women always in a submissive and inferior position. Often Mexican American men will go to Mexico to find their brides so that their women will not have been polluted by Anglo ways. There is, however, a group of Mexican women for whom the submissive role is not characteristic. These are the women who took part in the

Mexican Revolution and who were known for their bravery and "manliness." They were very macho.

The implications for an Anglo woman counselor with Chicano men, and even with Chicano preadolescents, are quite clear. Any female counselor needs to be very careful not to appear too aggressive or too forward in any counseling with Hispanic males.[23] Because of the sharp difference in roles, placing Chicano boys and girls together in coed counseling is ordinarily contraindicated.

Interaction among Chicano males sometimes involves verbal dueling which reaffirms the significance of language. Romano describes what is involved:

> This dueling consists of a complex use of everyday words as metaphors which contain insinuations, innuendos, and outright accusations of effeminacy and lack of courage. For example, seemingly innocent remarks which contain the word "leche," or milk, may constitute a veiled reference to sperm. Words such as "key," "whip," or "walnut" may refer to male genitalia. . . . In short, the intended metaphorical significance is derived from common everyday words and one must be wary enough to distinguish between the common usage and verbal thrusts.[24]

It is commonly known that community mental health services are not widely used by Chicanos. Commentators on this fact point out that Anglo mental health services are largely inaccessible to Chicanos because of several problems.[25] It is to be noted that these problems are generally present in any cross-cultural situation, but they have a pointed relevance with Chicanos. The first of these, as has already been noted, is the language barrier, which may be increased when technical jargon is added to an already difficult problem. Georgene Seward tells of Rusty, a Spanish American woman "who narrowly escaped the catheter because she did not understand the doctor's word 'void.' Her comment was, 'Why didn't he ask me if I'd peed? I'd have told him.' "[26]

The second problem is an insensitivity to indigenous world views, as, for example, in ignoring the importance of macho. An important world view for most Chicanos contains, as William Madsen points out, "ghosts, spirits, saints, and witches, as well as . . . the mundane and objective things of everyday life. God and the Virgin are not strangers to the Chicano but are Beings who can and do influence his life for better or for worse."[27]

A third problem is that of a class-bound orientation designed largely for verbal, upper-class clients. Some Anglo counselors are put off by Chicano counselees who do not hesitate to use the direct approach of lower-class life. So the counselee is likely to ask quite personal questions with no hesitation, such as, "Are you married?" A similar down-to-earth approach among typical Chicanos leads to their reluctance to leave a sick relative in a hospital, away from involved family life. Such an arrangement feels like a desertion to them, and the objectivity of the professional staff seems very cold and impersonal.

The fourth and most important problem is the caste superiority already referred to. Indeed, it is this feeling of superiority so common in the lives of white Americans that creates the greatest barrier in any cross-cultural efforts. Until all four of these problems are dealt with, however, little effective counseling with Chicanos is likely to take place.

Japanese Americans

A major issue in counseling with Japanese Americans centers on shame. James Michener, who described in vivid detail the coming of the Japanese to Hawaii, puts shame in a central place. In *Hawaii* he tells of Hashimoto who married a Hawaiian woman and was therefore excluded from all social contacts in the Japanese Hawaiian community.

> Men hungry for girls did not warn each other: "Remember what happened to Hashimoto!" Instinctively they remembered, for of him it had once been said: "All Japan will be ashamed of what you have done." And the young men were convinced that throughout every village of Japan the evil word had been passed: "Hashimoto Sutekiki married a Hawaiian woman and all Japan is ashamed of him."[28]

Some have described a difference between Americans and Japanese in terms of the difference between guilt and shame.[29] Americans, it is said, are a guilt-ridden people, and much of psychotherapy attempts to deal with personal feelings of guilt. Japanese, on the other hand, tend to be a shame-ridden people, and much therapeutic interest focuses on public feelings of shame that are felt by the entire community. Guilt is private and individual; shame is public and communal.

The emphasis on the avoidance of shame in the Japanese American community often leads to a charge of hypocrisy by the American community. If white Americans are prone to "tell it like it is," Japanese Americans are prone to tone down the telling in order to avoid shaming anyone, either themselves or others. To feel shame is to lose face, to be seen as somehow wrong by others. Since losing face is a critical matter in Japanese culture, Japanese Americans will go to considerable lengths to avoid being put in situations where losing face or feeling ashamed might result. Counseling is such a situation.

Shame is related to a rigid control of feelings. It is not that Japanese Americans do not have feelings; feelings are expressed freely and openly in recreational and avocational pursuits, but the areas of family and vocation are treated seriously, with high regard for performance of obligations and a mandatory insistence on the suppression of feelings. Rules for behavior are clearly formulated and a failure to follow them often results in a feeling of shame. Rules for behavior are often related to clearly defined roles, as with parents or teachers or counselors, and these rules cannot be set aside without strong feelings of shame.

Of particular importance is the feeling of obligation toward parents as authorities. Case studies of Japanese Americans who have needed treatment for emotional disorders are filled with instances of deep depression brought on by an inability to express

resentment openly and a subsequent turning of hostility in on the self as a face-saving device. Georgene Seward summarizes a study of five Japanese Americans as follows:

> Distance from parental figures is conspicuous in all [the five case studies] as well as inability to express resentment against them. In line with the externalization of authority and the shame-avoidance demands of Japanese tradition, hostility is consistently turned in on the self in the face-saving device of depression and somatic illnesses.[30]

Sociologist Harry Kitano writes of how Japanese characteristically do not bother others in interpersonal conflicts, preferring instead to internalize the problem. As Kitano puts it, the Japanese American "might 'eat his own heart out' and yet exhibit few overt signs of disturbance."[31]

It is in light of the shame-avoidance demands of the Japanese tradition that we can begin to understand reactions of Japanese Americans to the experience of being confined in relocation centers (termed concentration camps by many Japanese Americans) during World War II. Virtually every Nisei who experienced the indignities and injustice of internment from March 18, 1942, until the end of the war is very angry deep inside, but the training in suppressing feelings is so strong that little of that anger has been revealed. Because it has not been expressed does not mean that it does not exist. And the presence even today of Oriental Exclusion Clauses in deeds to homes in parts of Berkeley, even though declared unconstitutional, are still sharp reminders of the prejudice and persecution known only too well by Americans of Asian descent.

Following World War II, many Japanese Americans found their way into the Midwest, especially the Chicago area, where their orderly, responsible, reserved manner, and especially their compliance with authority, made integration into middle-class values relatively easy. Anthropologist Caudill and psychiatrist Babcock note how similar Japanese and American middle-class cultures are. They both "share the values of politeness, respect for authority and parental wishes, duty to community, diligence, cleanliness and neatness, emphasis on personal achievement of long-range goals, importance of keeping up appearances, etc."[32] These authors go on to point out, however, that we cannot infer from the above that Japanese and Americans are alike. What we can recognize is that Japanese in general and middle-class Americans in particular are both skilled at picking up clues from their environment and adapting themselves by suppressing their real feelings. In this sense, a passive, quiet, reserved, orderly pattern of life is not so much natural as it is learned. Japanese Americans, relocated from life on the West Coast, learned not to be conspicuous in their new settings, learned not to rock the boat. At this point, Japanese Americans are like other Americans of Asian origin who have learned patterns of survival as persecuted minorities. Asians in America have learned to feel inferior, in sharp contrast to Asians in their homelands who are proud of their heritage.

Implications here for counseling are quite clear. Familiarity with things Japanese, appreciation of the Asian milieu as appropriate and desirable, awareness of the unique contributions of the ancient cultures of Asia, and the development of pride in being Asian are all part of counseling with Japanese Americans.[33]

A second characteristic of Japanese Americans, related to shame, is order. They are neat, proper, orderly people. Their sense of order is seen in the distinction drawn between the different generations; only among the Japanese are the different generations given specific names. Thus, the generation born in Japan who migrated to the U.S. are the Issei. The second generation, those born in the U.S. of Japanese ancestry, are the Nisei. The third generation (young people today) are the Sansei, and the fourth generation (children today) are the Yonsei. Since each of these generations has distinctive characteristics and problems, it is crucial for effective counseling to place the counselee within the appropriate generational group. Marion Wake writes:

> The counselor should become familiar with the particular family structure, birth order of each of the marital partners in their original families, generation from which each comes, the social class from which each comes, and the amount of acculturation that has occurred for each family member.[34]

For example, the Sansei are described more properly as American Japanese then Japanese Americans since their ties with Japan are less and less real.[35] Feeling completely American, but excluded often from American culture by white Americans, the Sansei are those in sharpest and most overt rebellion.

Thomas Rohlen puts a high priority on orderliness in Japanese life. It is an expression of a character trait which is highly valued.

> To be neat, proper, and orderly—whether in housekeeping, factory routines, personal relations, or in daily ceremonies—is to possess the necessary will, energy, and attention. Japanese social order is buttressed by the idea that orderliness is an expression of something far more important—the character of those being orderly.[36]

Rohlen goes on to note how orderliness is reflected in an acute sensitivity to differences in age. To speak Japanese correctly is to have "a precise knowledge of the relative ages of the parties concerned."[37] Moreover, "women especially dress according to a rather minutely worked out aesthetic that relates patterns and color to fine gradations in age."[38] The entire hierarchy of bureaucratic authority in business in age-graded.

The implications for counseling are clear. Whereas white Americans may pay little attention to age difference between counselor and counselee, the Japanese American (even those quite emancipated from old country ways) never treat the age difference lightly. This factor becomes especially important if a young counselor is working with an older counselee.

When the counselor is older than the Japanese American client, a dependent relationship easily

develops. Psychiatrist Doi notes that dependency among Japanese children is encouraged. He writes, "In Japan dependency upon the parents is fostered and institutionalized into the social structure."[39] He describes how Japanese mothers tend to see their babies as helpless, whereas the Western world tends to see them as inherently autonomous.[40] The implications for counseling suggest the need for more demonstration by the counselor of personal concern, more flexibility in structuring the relationship, more willingness to function in an unorthodox manner (as, for example, going to the home). Georgene Seward advocates a special willingness to allow Japanese Americans to be dependent on the therapist: "The therapist should express warm acceptance of the patient's dependency needs to an extent usually contraindicated in dealing with individuals from core culture."[41]

The emphasis on order in Japanese culture leads to a desire to be very sure what is expected of one. A typical Japanese child's training involves learning a whole system of obligations, duty to family, to neighbors, and to country. It is extremely important for the Japanese, and for the Japanese American, to know exactly what is expected in any relationship. Thus, in counseling, it is more crucial for the Japanese American to be very sure about the structure of the counseling procedure than it might be for other clients.

For an orderly people in whose lives continuity is an important factor, the discontinuity created by the relocation camps and by the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can hardly be overestimated. No Japanese Americans can be counseled apart from an acknowledgment of the powerful influence of these events on their lives.

Chinese Americans

Few Chinese Americans can be understood apart from family relationships; close family ties are a distinguishing feature of their heritage. Two autobiographies by Chinese American women illustrate this fact clearly: Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior.* In each of these books the relationships with parents and other members of the family make up the bulk of the story. So, for example, Jade Snow Wong tells of the struggle she had with her father over going out at night, as a college student, without her parents' permission. When she told her father that her teacher regarded her as an individual capable of making her own decisions, her father shouted in anger:

> A little learning has gone to your head! How can you permit a foreigner's theory to put aside the practical experience of the Chinese, who for thousands of years have preserved a most superior family pattern? Confucius had already presented an organized philosophy of manners and conduct when the foreigners were unappreciatively persecuting Christ. Who brought you up? Who clothed you, fed you, sheltered you, nursed you? Do you think you were born aged sixteen? You owe honor to us before you satisfy your personal whims.[42]

Maxine Hong Kingston opens her more contemporary book with an account of an aunt, back in China, who had committed suicide after being attacked by the village for having become pregnant before being married. Kingston writes of a life peopled with ghosts from her family's past. She uses as a subtitle for her book, "Memories of a Girlhood Among Ghosts."[43]

In counseling with Chinese Americans, family concerns take priority over individual needs, and most decisions are made in terms of what is best for the family. Since most counseling theory, as used in the West, has an individualistic orientation, customary approaches may be inappropriate with many Chinese Americans. But there is a second, more complicated factor to be considered when counseling with Chinese Americans: the factor of community.

Kingston points to the place of community when, in describing the attack on her aunt by the villagers, she writes: "The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them."[44] The accent on community is particularly Chinese. Anthropologist Francis L.K. Hsu, in his authoritative book, *Americans and Chinese,* points out that interdependence characterizes the Chinese whereas individualism is typically American. Chinese tend to find their personal security not in the conquest of their physical environment as Americans generally do but rather in a system of mutual dependence within their community. Dr. Hsu describes how mutual dependence operates:

> When notoriety and wealth come to the Chinese his first thought is to shine among, and share his success with, those who are related to him, parents, children, spouses, distant relatives, friends, neighbors, or by extension, merely residents of the same district. His glory is their glory, and he, in turn, is more satisfied because they have shone with him.[45]

When a study book on mainland China was written for United Methodist Women, the title given it was *China: Search for Community.*[46] The question for Chinese Americans is: Which community? Is the counselee primarily Chinese, or primarily American, or primarily a hyphenated Chinese-American? The problem is complicated by the fact that most white Americans do not see Chinese Americans as different from Chinese, whereas any Chinese American who has traveled in Asia is instantly aware of how real the differences are.

Two Chinese American psychotherapists divide Chinese Americans into three different communities: traditionalists, marginalists, and Asian Americans.[47] They suggest that identity is to be understood in terms of one of these three communities, and that knowing the differences between them is important for doing counseling.

Traditionalists tend to be first generation Americans who were born in the old country and who cling to the old country ways. Most of them are the descendants of those early immigrants who were brought to the West Coast from China to work on the railroads and in the gold mines. Many were

brought here as indentured laborers who expected to earn a fortune and then return to China. After the gold rush and the completion of the railroads, they settled in Chinatowns, retained the customs of their homeland, and remained largely Chinese. They are the older generation today that still lives in Chinatown, works in restaurants, laundries, and curio shops. More recently their ranks have been supplemented by immigrants from the mainland following the 1949 Revolution, and most recently from Southeast Asia. In some ways the traditionalists are more Chinese than the people who never left China or Southeast Asia. It is this group that is often referred to as "typical Chinese." They are seldom seen in mental health clinics since the very thought of seeking help outside the family is alien to their way of life. For many of them, language is a real problem.

Much that is written about working with Chinese students in American universities is colored by this traditionalist orientation. The overseas students are usually in the United States only long enough to obtain an education. One group of writers suggests that such students are seldom found among activists in campus rebellion:

> The Asian student in the United States has within his or her identity much more of the homeland, student status, family, minority status, and future responsibilities, ties and obligations than does the average American student. Such a student has less concern about autonomy and independence and much less stake in rebellion.[48]

In working with Chinese students who are only temporarily in the U.S., the counselor needs to be especially sensitive to their traditionalist orientation. A specific recommendation for working with such persons is as follows:

> Since Chinese may feel ashamed and suspicious in seeking help for emotional problems, the therapist may be able to establish more rapport by not making early demands for him to be open and expressive. Such demands can easily be interpreted by the Chinese as disrespect for his behavior. In addition, the Chinese may feel uncomfortable with a therapist who initally provides too little structure and too much ambiguity.[49]

Therapeutic groups are particularly difficult for overseas students of Asian background. After studying Asian students (most of them Chinese) at a midwestern university, a group of researchers wrote a strong word of caution about the use of encounter-type groups:

> Group functions or exercises are seen as lacking in dignity and intimacy. The personal pride of the foreign student runs against the psychological stripping which communal therapies require. The foreign student's difficulty in discerning the structure implicit in the host culture's modes of interaction may be further compounded in the typical therapeutic setting. When our patient groups have dealt specifically with one another's behaviors, our foreign students have tended to feel insulted, demeaned and attacked. . . . The therapist must never underestimate the sense and importance of dignity to the foreign student patient.[50]

These comments are generally applicable to all traditionalists.

A second community in which some Chinese Americans find their identity describes a problem by its very name: marginalists. Included here are the Chinese Americans who have chosen to leave Chinatowns with their distinctly Chinese ways and have become assimilated into the larger American culture. A trend in this direction is seen in the statistics dealing with the change in percentage of Chinese Americans who live in the San Francisco Chinatown. Whereas in 1940, 72 percent of San Franciscan Chinese Americans lived in Chinatown, in 1950 the percentage had dropped to 41, and in 1960 to 23.[51] It is the marginalists who leave Chinatown and, indeed, who tend to stay away from Chinatown. This group tends to be more professional and more highly educated, to mix with the white majority in educated circles. They tend to be second and third generation Americans, many of whom are thoroughly Americanized. It is with this group that the conflict of the two cultures is seen in its sharpest form. This is the group that has rebelled against parental values and has chosen to adopt Western values. Critics of this group refer to them as "bananas," i.e., white inside and yellow outside.

One Chinese American housewife in Sunnyvale, California, describes her predicament clearly in response to an accusation of being too complacent:

> You say Chinatown is too close. Yes, it is crowded. So we sent our sons and daughters to be doctors, lawyers, engineers, pharmacists, so they can get out of Chinatown. You say that is not enough. OK. I will tell Mrs. Hong to get her son to take English major like you. So he can go out make, as you say, self expression, and tell the Lo Fan [white man] who he really is. I know who he is. He is Mrs. Hong's son who gets a B average and wants to work in the Post Office. . . . You say we are all geniuses and should not sit in "nothing jobs" and must express ourselves. Good. Is expressing ourselves a virtue? This is a Lo Fan's obsession and you say we must be like him not be ourselves.[52]

The marginalists are caught between two cultures, rejecting of the old yet not fully accepted in the new.

It is the marginalists who feel most keenly the stereotyping of the white majority. They are seen as inhibited and passive, as having a meek-and-mild syndrome, as keeping to themselves and taking care of their own. Desiring to become part of the mainstream culture, they struggle against cultural stereotyping that is reinforced by racism. Psychologist Tong describes the problem:

> Imported to America and reactivated for its functional and adaptive value, the survival psychology of "meek and mildness" solidified and, in its all-too-successful response to total repression by white racism, became embedded in the Chinese-American psyche as a permanent identity.

With all these problems, the Chinese American marginalists are more likely to make use of counseling than either traditionalists or Asian Americans. Their efforts at assimilation make them more open to therapy.

The third community that provides identity for Chinese Americans is the Asian-American group. Like the marginalists, this group is also in rebellion against parental values, but it seeks to develop special Asian-American values rather than adopt American ones. Commonly identified as the "radical" or "militant" group among Chinese Americans, it has come into prominence on campuses where the Asian Caucus has become a significant

political force. Chinese Americans in this group find their identity by standing with other Asians over against the white, western culture.

A typical member of this Asian-American community is a 22-year-old first-year graduate student in biochemistry. A portion of his case study reads as follows:

> Throughout most of his life, Gale attempted to deny his racial identity because he felt shameful about being Chinese. However, within the last four years, a phenomenal change occurred in Gale. He actively participated in the Third World Strike at the University and became involved in a number of community change committees. Gale recalls with great fondness the "esprit de corps" and contagion he experienced with other concerned Asians. His parents had been delighted about his reorientation toward certain Chinese values. They were especially happy to see him dating other Asian girls and volunteering his time to help tutor deprived children in Chinatown. However, they did not understand his activist thinking and outspoken behavior towards authority figure.[54]

The Asian-American group is especially suspicious of therapeutic activity; it sees psychotherapy as a method of maintaining the status quo through seeking adjustment to existing patterns. Since this group is especially sensitive to the racism of the majority culture, it is unwilling to adjust and wants, instead, to accomplish a major transformation of the social, economic, and political scenes. It is this group which reminds the majority how all-pervasive racism is and how patronizing white Americans tend to be toward all persons of Asian ancestry.

In all four of the ethnic groups I have touched on, the issue of racism is a crucial one.

This discussion has been suggestive rather than exhaustive. If this effort has alerted readers to the multiplicity of issues that are present when any counseling across cultures is attempted, then my goal has been achieved.

NOTES

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8 Maya Angelou, *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* (New York: Bantam [1976] 1977), pp. 234-235.

9 Franklin R. McDonald, "Psychological Flight from 'Black Identity,' " in Georgene Seward, editor, *Clinical Studies in Culture Conflict*, p. 76.

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20 Horace M. Peak, "Search for Identity by a Young Mexican-American," in Georgene Seward, editor, *Clinical Studies in Culture Conflict*, p. 204.

21 Op. cit., p. 54.

22 Ibid., p. 214.

23 Cf. Clemmont Vontress, op. cit., p. 54.

24 Quoted by William Madsen, op. cit., p. 226.

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II. FACTORS IN MARRIAGE COUNSELING WITH CHINESE

Actress Julie Andrews, whose popularity skyrocketed with her Broadway role of Eliza in *My Fair Lady*, and her screen successes in *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*, starred in another film which was not a box office success. This was the lavish musical *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, a 1968 film which had as one of its distinguishing characteristics a completely negative image of Chinese. American Chinese Francis L.K. Hsu describes the film:

> All the numerous Chinese in this film are little shadowy and sly figures who smoke opium, wear pigtails, walk like puppets, besides being white slavers. On top of all this, they are also cowards to be repeatedly bested by a gangster-type white woman. To find the nearest Chinese counterpart to it, one would have to go to the worst anti-American diatribe under Communist regimes.[1]

It is a measure of the degree to which we are accustomed to the stereotyping of Asians in negative ways that most of us would not recognize how demeaning this film is of Chinese. We have been so trained to think of the West as right and the East as wrong that it is easy to carry over the bias into every area of life. It usually takes someone from Asia to even make us aware of the bias.

The way to begin any cross-cultural study is to recognize the personal biases we bring to it. This is especially true in dealing with the cultures of the East. As long as Westerners look down on Easterners, as long as the West sees its ways as the right ways and sees the East as needing to change, there is little real hope for significant intercultural progress. A Hindu student from India puts the issue clearly:

> One of the main causes of the resentment against the Western powers is their arrogant assumption that the "white fathers" know what is good for the backward Asian peoples, and that the decisions of the Western powers should be liked, and if not liked, then lumped by the Asians. . . . If the Western democracies want the Asian democracies as friends and allies, then let them be accepted and treated as equals, with no mental reservations.[2]

David and Vera Mace, probably the best informed Westerners on marriage in its world setting, begin their authoritative book *Marriage: East and West* by asserting that the only way to begin is by recognizing the largely "unconscious attitude of superiority that the West is better than the East."[3]

The researcher in intercultural concerns faces the same need that confronts any marriage partner struggling with differences in a spouse. To learn to accept different ways as legitimate and appropriate rather than as wrong and inappropriate is to overcome a major hurdle in marital matters. Indeed, one of the interesting findings in marital research is that couples in the 50 to 60 age bracket often experience a satisfaction in their marriage unknown in the earlier years. The reason seems to be an acceptance, finally, of the fact that the spouse is not going to change, so that instead of waiting for a change there is now a new appreciation of things as they are.

Anyone who has tried to live in another culture knows how significant a change in attitude can be from one that sees strange ways of a new culture as "wrong" to one that sees them simply as "different." One analyzer of cross-cultural living describes four stages that newcomers characteristically go through as they try to live in a strange culture. The first reaction is one of fascination with new sights, new tastes, new methods of doing things, new customs in relationships. The new is intriguing and fascinating. The second reaction is quite different. As novelty wears off, a growing hostility develops as one petty irritant is added to another until the total picture is one that produces anger and sometimes real hostility. Many visitors never move beyond this stage, for any new culture does have its obvious irritating differences. The third reaction, for those who have managed to ride out the second, is one of accommodation to the fact of difference, an adjustment to things as they are without judging or comparing with the familiar ways of the old country. The fourth and last reaction is one of enthusiastic welcoming of the contributions of the new culture without giving up emotional identification with one's own (bi-culturalism).[4]

Since I am writing for a Western audience, I began this article with a reference to an actress and movie star. Were I writing for a Chinese audience, I would understand that such a beginning would be inappropriate. The interest shown in film stars in the United States is quite foreign to the attitudes of typical Chinese. Again, Professor Hsu helps our understanding:

> Actors and actresses have received the lowest social approval in China, and . . . conversely they enjoy the highest prestige in the United States. They are held in contempt in China because they exhibit their bodies as their principal asset; they are admired in the United States because they epitomize the success that can be achieved by the bare individual.[5]

It is this kind of difference that makes cross-cultural study difficult.

Perhaps the most significant finding in cross-cultural studies, after personal bias has been recognized, is the need to avoid simplistic explanations. Culture is always a many-faceted matter and individual differences are primary considerations. Consider, for example, how it is impossible to speak of "Singapore Chinese" as a single cultural entity. Some Chinese in Singapore have been there for several generations, are identified as "Straits Chinese" with the characteristics of those who have lived for generations on the Malaccan Straits and with much Malayan influence on their language, food, and way of life. Most Singaporean Chinese speak the Fukien dialect (from Fukien Province on the Southeast Coast of mainland China), but others speak any one of the four other major dialects (Hakka, Swatow, Cantonese, and Mandarin). Some Chinese have never spoken any language but English; they often can neither read nor write in Chinese. Some Singaporean Chinese have come recently from China and, in typical Classical Chinese pattern, fully expect to return to their homeland; others are solidly Singaporeans and have no intention of ever leaving Singapore. Some still live a rural life where a patriarchal family system has hardly changed in four thousand years; others have lived all their lives in high-rise housing in an industrialized and thoroughly Westernized environment. How can one possibly speak of *the* Chinese in Singapore?

By recognizing tendencies of oversimplification in understanding behavior, cross-cultural studies help to correct a bias in theories of psychotherapy. In most such theories, the individual is treated as an isolated bio-social unit, and standards of what is normal or abnormal are usually determined from the perspective of a single cultural norm. Thus, behavior that is quite "normal" within a person's own subculture is considered pathological because it deviates from the main cultural pattern. Georgene Seward cites a case in which the definition of "reality" varies with one's perspective:

> A black man is brought into Night Court in a southern city and charged with assaulting a white man in a night club.
>
> On questioning, the accused gave his name as Prince X, born in a British colony where he claimed to have been reared in a mansion with golden gates. According to the defendant, his father was politically powerful, often taking the boy with him in his coach-and-four to call on the governor. The father was descended from an upper-class Syrian family which disowned the son for marrying "beneath him."
>
> After announcements of his "death" has been circulated in the community, the young man emigrated to the United States where he served in the armed forces during World War II. After having been mustered out, he found work as a pianist in the night club where he had been arrested for defending himself against a white man who had called him a "nigger."
>
> The accused's story was considered a bizarre fabrication by the police on the basis of which he was sent to a VA hospital where he was diagnosed "paranoid schizophrenia." Later, when it was discovered through the coincidence of being recognized by a visiting dignitary that his story was true in every detail, including the golden gates which were validated by a photograph, he was at long last released.[6]

The erroneousness of applying norms from one culture to another is further illustrated in Hawaii where one able commentator on Hawaiian strategy for coping with Western patterns describes the typical Hawaiian attitude as "ain't no big thing." Whereas to the Westerner this attitude of shrugging off issues as of little significance is seen as indifference at best, or as irresponsible at worst, it turns out to be a strategy which is highly effective as Hawaiian Americans struggle with the problems of a socio-economic system over which they have little control. It provides a way to stay in relationship with reality without being overpowered by it. To treat major calamities in an "ain't no big thing" manner is to minimize risk in a way that bolsters mental health. Alan Howard comments on how Hawaiian women use this approach:

> Risk minimization is a technique available to women not only to protect their own self-esteem and social involvement, but also to keep their husband's integrity and family involvement from falling below critical levels.[7]

The tendency toward oversimplification in the mental health field is further illustrated in an example given by anthropologist Gregory Bateson. He cites the rain dance of the American Indian as an instance in which a complex religious phenomenon is looked at simply as an act of magic. "Rain dances are, obviously, to make rain," so the simplistic explanation goes. However, as Bateson says, "the real point of things like rain dances is to affirm a complex relationship between oneself and the weather and the supernatural powers that control oneself and the weather."[8]

At the risk of falling prey to the very principle of oversimplification, I attempt to identify several aspects of Chinese culture which are distinctive enough to be discussed as discrete entities. These are elements of Chinese culture so deeply rooted that they influence every Chinese no matter how removed from cultural roots he or she may be. They are elements which play an often decisive role in understanding the kind of conflict that the marriage counselor sees. I have classified them as: face, place, family, spirits, and moderation.

Face

To most Westerners, the concept of "face" is considered to be an Asian idiosyncracy almost beyond comprehension. Thus, it was easy for most Western reporters at the Paris Vietnam talks to see the dispute over the shape of the conference table, which greatly delayed the start of the conference, as a good illustration of "Oriental face" in action. Professor Hsu reminds us, however, of something the reporters overlooked: a similar situation occurred in the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when discussion of peace was delayed until the five Western monarchs worked out the details of entering the conference room simultaneously. More recently, at the Potsdam Conference of 1945, the

conference began only after Churchill, Stalin, and Truman entered at the same moment through three separate doors.[9] Obviously, face-saving is not an Asian invention.

Even though Westerners are not inclined to talk of "saving" or "losing" face, a common sense approach to human relationships recognizes that any person whose self-esteem has been threatened is more difficult to deal with. Harry Stack Sullivan saw self-esteem as so significant that he postulated as a major rule in psychotherapy, "Never undermind a patient's self-esteem." His first goal in therapy was to help a patient to understand that in *his* presence the patient had nothing to fear. The implications of this therapeutic approach are quite obvious, not only for therapy but for teaching and business and, indeed, all social situations. One study puts it succinctly: "A reciprocal conspiracy of face-saving is a mutually beneficial regulator in social interaction."[10]

The concept of saving face is not exclusively Chinese, but "face" for the Chinese does have a special meaning. The unique characteristic that Chinese give to saving or losing face is related to classical Chinese thinking about the family. The main issue is not personal; it is to hold up the family name.

This emphasis on the collective family as opposed to the individual may be the most significant difference between Chinese and Westerners, and particularly between Chinese and Americans. The interdependence of family members in a Chinese family runs directly contrary to the independent, self-reliant, autonomous functioning of the typical American. In virtually every aspect of life, this basic difference in the two cultures finds expression. Hsu, in his penetrating comparison of the two cultures, in his book *Americans and Chinese*, uses this distinction as the heart of his study.[11]

Most Americans are puzzled by Chinese names, and the reason is obvious. For Chinese, the family name comes first. It is no surprise that one of the very first problems a Chinese faces on coming to the West is what name to use. So Yeh Hua Kuo, who knows that the Westerner will be confused over which is his given name and which is his family name, adopts the English name assigned to him by his teacher in the English-speaking school and becomes Stephen Hua-Kuo Yeh. Who knows what it does to a person to have to change his name in order to find acceptance in a new setting?

The Chinese practice of writing the family name first implies the primary significance of the family unit. Identity is not an individual matter; it is a family matter. Any achievement or distinction, any failure or dishonor, reflects not only on the individual but especially on the family. That the family should not lose face is of supreme significance and all other considerations take a second place.

Saving face for the sake of the family has important implications for marriage counseling. In the first place, most Chinese hesitate to go outside of the family for any kind of help. Displaying dirty linen in public is simply not done, because the family loses face. In interviews with Chinese counselors in Southeast Asia, I was told over and over again that for a Chinese to talk over marriage problems with an outsider would be "shameful" or "disgraceful" or "degrading." One family hesitates to tell their minister that their son is a drug addict because the family would lose face. For a wife to seek help without her husband's knowledge is to cause him to lose face. Indeed, suicide may be chosen as a more acceptable option to seeking professional help outside the family.[12]

Any counselor in any culture experiences resistance in people toward personal disclosures which are belittling. I recall counseling for several weeks with an American couple and making no headway whatsoever, only to discover that each was currently having an affair with someone else with the full knowledge of the spouse. Their image in my eyes was so important to them that they hesitated to be honest with me, even though they were paying good money to be helped! I was reminded of Sullivan's assertion that people will do almost anything, including scuttling therapeutic programs, to maintain their self-esteem.

Nevertheless, there is an aspect of face-saving that is distinctly Chinese. Some writers have identified this distinction by noting a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is a private feeling, whereas shame is public. Guilt may be experienced by an individual who feels he or she has done something wrong, according to his or her own standards, whereas shame is felt by a person who has experienced a loss of status in the eyes of someone else. For the Chinese, loss of face generally means a feeling of shame as opposed to the feeling of guilt.

Face-saving for the Chinese is thus not an individual matter. It is typically Chinese to hold elaborate wedding feasts and funerals even at the cost of financial ruin in order to save face in the presence of the community. And in business dealings, face-saving is not only for one's self but for the other person as well. The often complicated system of middlemen in business transactions serves the purpose of saving face for persons on both sides of buying and selling. Face-saving is a matter of maintaining dignity for all parties concerned and thus becomes an important factor in any kind of interpersonal relating.

It can be noted that resistance to seeking help outside the family is breaking down. Children in school are taught to go to their teachers for help. Young people educated in Western ways are more open than their parents to making decisions regarding their own lives. Young parents are being trained to seek help in family planning and, indeed, often find it easier to talk over matters of birth control with persons outside the family. Nevertheless, the decision-making process in typical Chinese culture is not an individual matter in which one's personal preferences are a major concern. What is best for the family turns out to be the pathway down which most people will go.

Place

A second distinguishing characteristic of Chinese culture is "place." When a Chinese American author writes her autobiography, it is natural for her to use as the title of her book, *Fifth Chinese Daughter.*[13] As the fifth daughter in the family, she has a distinctive place in the hierarchy of duties and responsibilities. A role is assigned to her according to the circumstance of her birth and the rules of succession, and not according to her personal merit. This role is clearly understood by all concerned and is generally accepted without dispute. Her place in the family is assured, but the place is given, not earned.

To a large degree, the place accorded to a person in the family provides for identity. As long as the family is intact, identity is assured. Who a person is begins with who the family is. How a person functions, especially at the time of family festivities, is clearly specified. Thus at a wedding or a funeral there are specified responsibilities for the eldest son, for the second daughter, and so on. Children in the family are commonly referred to as number one son, or number five daughter. One eldest son in Singapore reported to me that his brothers and sisters always visit him when they come to town. This would not be true, he said, if he were not the eldest son. Although his sisters are English in manner and were educated in England, when they came to be married they asked his permission in a formal way. When he married, his parents had to approve his choice of a wife. Otherwise he could not have married her, for it would have been too hard on her. Without his parents' consent, no dialogue could have resulted.

Of particular interest for the marriage counselor is the place of the husband's mother in reference to her daughter-in-law. It is in this relationship that a Western bias often clouds the real issue. Dr. Hsu tells of seeing a movie in the United States which showed a young couple having a quarrel. The wife packs her suitcase in anger and runs out of the apartment. Her husband's mother, who lives on the floor above, then appears and comforts her son, saying, "You're not alone, son. I am here." At these words, Dr. Hsu reports, the audience roared with laughter. In their minds it was very clear that the mother-in-law was the cause of the young couple's quarrel. Moreover, she had compounded the problem by not having sense enough to stay away after the quarrel had flared out into the open. A Chinese audience, Dr. Hsu says, would not have seen anything to laugh about in these events. He writes:

> They would have seen the younger woman, and not the older one, as the culprit. A man's tie with his parents customarily has priority over his marital bond. Only a bad woman would leave her husband because of a conflict between the two responsibilities. Given this framework, the mother who consoled her son was doing nothing out of order.[14]

In the Chinese culture, it is the place of the daughter-in-law to be subservient to her mother-in-law. In the patriarchal family pattern, the young wife goes to live with her husband's family, becomes a part of his family. In the most traditional families she has been chosen by her husband's parents to be the son's wife, to become an additional member in their home. If she chafes under the necessity of being submissive to her mother-in-law, her salvation comes through patient acceptance of the relationship at present, knowing that when she has given birth to a son, she will eventually hold the cherished position of mother-in-law herself.

The significance of the mother-in-law situation is understood only in light of the mother-son relationship. David and Vera Mace put the issue clearly:

> Nothing that a woman ever achieves is remotely comparable to the proud moment when she gives her husband a male child. This is her shining hour of glorious triumph. The Chinese character for "good" is compounded of the two characters for "woman" and "boy." A woman with a son is as good a thing as can possibly be imagined.[15]

At the time of the Chinese New Year, it is the practice for parents to be visited, starting with the husband's parents. I was present in Singapore one February, at the time of the Chinese New Year, and talked with a number of young families about their celebration of the New Year. Although many of them were quite Westernized, all agreed that visiting their families was important, and all of them, without exception, visited the man's parents first. One husband reported that if he were to visit his mother-in-law first, she would berate him as an unfilial son for not having visited his mother first, for not giving his mother her proper place.

Family

It is already clear that the concepts of face and place are directly related to the patriarchal family. We have noted how saving face really means saving face for the family, and how place in the family is the means of establishing personal identity. It is the concept of the patriarchal family which establishes the idea of filial piety, especially between son and father, and which assigns the place of woman in the Chinese culture.

A discussion of the patriarchal family is of particular importance today because of the forces that are eroding this type of family organization. David and Vera Mace believe that this pattern of family life which has provided stability for the Chinese culture for four thousand years is now on the way out. They write:

> The evidence is overwhelming that the patriarchal family cannot ultimately survive in the new kind of industrial society that is coming into being in the modern world. . . . The patriarchal family system cannot serve a free and fluid social system. It becomes a hindrance, a drag on progress, an anachronism. In the end, it has to go.[16]

Even though many of the forms of the patriarchal family are on the way out, the emotional impact of this structure remains firmly rooted in the culture. The patriarchal family is based on the authority of the man as father, on the subservience of wife to husband, on filial piety between father and son. Its importance is far greater than the individual family situation, for it involves the establishment of pat-

terms of respect for law and order which prepare family members for life in the widest circles of human society. Filial piety was regarded by Confucius as the root of all virtue.

The typical Chinese attitude toward parents is quite different from the typical American attitude. The contrast is seen in the responses of American college students and their Chinese counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan to the projective test called Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Respondents are shown a series of cards depicting various ambiguous situations and are asked to write a story about the picture. The first card shows a boy looking at a violin on the table before him. Dr. Hsu reports on the differing responses of American and Chinese students:

> Most Americans see the problem as one between the boy and his mother, the mother wants him to practice the violin, but the son wants to go out to play baseball with his friends. Most Chinese see, on the other hand, his parents on the same side as the boy. They want him to learn the violin and he wants to do so. The commonly mentioned problem is that the family is too poor to hire a tutor.[17]

The independence from parental control shown by young Americans is unknown in the classical Chinese family and is still viewed as improper by most Chinese even today. In the United States, for example, it is common for young couples to marry immediately upon completion of college training, but for most Chinese this is unthinkable. One student summarizes the Chinese situation:

> Our parents scrape and save to send us to university in the hopes that when we graduate we will support them. Most of them just will not hear of marriage the moment we leave the university. And even if they do, after deductions for the parental home, precious little is left for our love nest.[18]

The patriarchal family pattern has made virtually impossible any concept of equality between husband and wife. To be sure, the role of the woman in the Chinese culture has been clearly defined with very considerable status assigned; the status provides absolute security, but it does not provide for equality. Marriage as a fellowship of equals simply does not fit into the Eastern way of thinking about hierarchical relations in human society. Rather than being equal, married partners are seen as being different types of people, each of whom contributes uniquely to the family. Yang, the male element in Chinese cosmology, represents positive and superior elements (sun, light, strength, activity), and Yin, the female element, represents the negative and inferior (moon, darkness, weakness, passivity). According to Confucius, "It is the law of nature that woman should be held under the dominance of man."[17]

One of the tensions in Asia today results from the erosion of this patriarchal concept of women. With greater access to education and more opportunity for employment and greater financial security, more and more women are chafing against the restrictions assigned them by their culture. How significant Christianity has been in improving the status of women in the Chinese culture is not easy to determine, but the importance of Christian teaching is far greater than the small percentage of Christians among Chinese might suggest. The pioneering work of the church in opening up educational opportunities for women, and, indeed, the whole Christian enterprise of schools and colleges among Chinese has given considerable impetus to the liberalization of attitudes toward women.[20] To a large degree, however, even when formal structures provide more freedom, the psychological mindset of Chinese remains quite patriarchal.

Spirits

Related to the patriarchal family, yet distinct from it, is folk religion. Visit any town in Taiwan today and note the large number of temples devoted to the gods of folk religion. Many of these are for the worship of a local god or goddess chosen by a family to be their special god. Every household in the classical Chinese family had its Kitchen God shrine, and even today the worship of a family god is a common feature of family life. For many Chinese today, especially among the uneducated in rural areas, their religious festivals provide the only real excitement in their lives. Dragon processions, elaborate floats, frenzied dancing, "holy" men torturing themselves while in a trance, all accompanied by firecrackers, drums, and cymbals, are a common part of folk festivals. And virtually any decision about the matters of daily life is made with the help of magical rites or fortune telling in a local temple. Professor Hsu writes of the almost universal involvement of Chinese with the world of spirits:

> I do not know of a single city or town . . . in Taiwan today that is without diviners or geomancy readers, physiognomists, phrenologists, mediums, and all kinds of fortune tellers. For a fee, these persons offer to foretell the length of a person's life, and his business prospects, or to determine the marriageability of a boy or girl, or to decide on the ritual suitability of a new housesite or graveyard.[21]

It is this universal involvement in the world of spirits that adds a distinctive note to counseling in the Chinese culture. Most people who have chosen to seek counseling are either at the same time involved in seeking help through the magical means of folk religion, or have previously made use of such resources. Indeed, the mental health literature of our day is filled with suggestions about how mental health professionals can learn to work with local practitioners of folk religion in order to complement professional insight with the intuitive wisdom of folk practitioners.

In a culture saturated with advice-giving through magical devices, it is not be wondered at that nondirective forms of counseling are largely ineffective. If a Chinese imbued with folk religion finally does decide to seek counseling, the expectation will be that quite specific advice will be given about how life is to be conducted. Anything less than this is likely to be interpreted as indifference and lack of caring.

Intimately related to folk religion is the worship of ancestors. In addition to the Kitchen God shrine in every extended family household, there is an

altar for the worship of ancestors in the main room of every home. Fortune tellers and mediums often serve the function of arranging a meeting, or at least a communication, with either the local gods or one's ancestors.[22]

To the Western mind, ancestor worship is largely a mystery cloaked in images of ghosts and wandering spirits of a pre-scientific day. For the Eastern mind, ancestor worship is concerned primarily with rites of kinship solidarity. The father-son relationship is the prototype of the relationship between the two worlds, and is the vital link in the unending chain between generations. The crucial significance of having a son is found in the assurance that a son will care not only for his parents while they are alive, but will also continue to revere them after they are dead. The chief significance of ancestor worship is its emphasis on family continuity.

To Westerners, the worship of local gods in folk religion and the rituals of ancestor worship seem anachronistic in our modern world. Indeed, among many educated Chinese the superstitions of folk religion have been largely discarded. But the hold of the cult of ancestor on the hearts and minds of Chinese remains very real. Professor Hsu makes a blanket statement to this effect:

> I know of no Chinese, save the relatively few Christians and Mohammedans, who do not adhere to this cult [ancestor worship]. It is literally the universal religion of China. . . . Ancestor worship is an active ingredient in every aspect of Chinese society, from the family to the government, from local business to the national economy.[23]

Hsu goes on to point out that a main purpose of the Chinese New Year is to provide for a reunion not only of present family members, but also a reunion of the living and the dead. "On this occasion, ancestral souls are ritually invited to the house while gods are not. A few days later they are ritually seen off." He adds that a similar ritual is observed on the day set aside for the annual cleaning of tombs:

> This ritual reunion with the ancestors is repeated on Ch'ing Ming, or what may be roughly designated the Chinese version of Easter, when members of all households visit the ancestral graveyards, clean the tombs, make offerings of food and incense, and share a picnic with the dead.[24]

This "active ingredient" in Chinese society combines with face and place and the patriarchal family system to strengthen family ties. Because the ancestors are seen as having to power to dispense punishment on the living when they are angered, the worship of ancestors is seen as a way to keep families intact by preventing hostilities from surfacing.

Moderation

The fifth factor deals with an issue more elusive than the other four: the sense of moderation. Moderation finds expression in face where conflict is avoided by "saving face" lest a permanent scar result. Moderation is given expression in "place," where husband and wife have clearly defined arrangements whereby conflict is avoided. The ecstacy known in some Western marriages may not be present, but neither, as Hsu points out, are "the intense hatred and deep-seated pain that are often generated in love between American husbands and wives."[25] Moderation is the keynote in the patriarchal family where sticking together is enhanced by keeping emotions under control, by underplaying matters of the heart. Moderation is the result of a fatalistic folk religion where what is to be is to be and hence is to be accepted without rebellion or resentment.

Professor Paul Clasper, who has lived much of his life in the East, and who now writes from Hong Kong with a deep appreciation for things Chinese, describes the Chinese contribution to the culture of the world in these words:

> Frequently it is described as a contribution of a sense of balance and an inclusive perspective; a seeing of several possibilities with a sense of detachment. It is always practical, down-to-earth. It is many-sided, with a capacity to relate to various people and situations, rather than stressing only one aspect.[26]

One of my students at Trinity Theological College in Singapore summarized a similar perception by saying that the Westerner is "either-or" while the Easterner is "both-and."

Moderation is the key to understanding Chinese and their expression of feeling. To think of Chinese as unfeeling is obviously ridiculous; to ask when the Chinese feels it is appropriate to express feeling is to come closer to the matter. The sense of being correct, of doing what is right and proper, is more important than to do what is practical. Maintaining the balance of things as they are, compromising to accommodate the needs of all, and seeking harmony in all things were all cardinal virtues of Confucius.

I recognize how presumptious it is of me to attempt to identify distinctive aspects of Chinese culture after such a brief exposure to Chinese life. Nevertheless, the importance of beginning cross-cultural study outweighs the limitations that such a study invariably has. And any attempt at identifying issues peculiar to one culture makes it clearer how easy it is for any counselor to read his or her own culture into any situation. Thus this discussion ends where it began, with the recognition of what a limited cultural perspective any one of us works within.

NOTES

1 Francis L.K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese* (New York: Henry Shuman, 1970), pp. 341-342.
2 Quoted by Hsu, ibid., pp. 418-419.
3 David and Vera Mace, *Marriage: East and West* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 19.
4 Paul Pedersen, "The Field of Intercultural Counseling," in Paul Pedersen *et al*, editors, *Counseling Across Cultures* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawai', 1976), p. 28.
5 Hsu, op. cit., p. 166.
6 Georgene Hoffman Seward, *Psychotherapy and Culture Conflict* (New York: Ronald, 1972), p. 3.
7 Alan Howard, *Ain't No Big Thing: Coping Strategies in a Hawaiian-American Community* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), p. 153.
8 Gregory Bateson, "Distortion Under Culture," in William P. Lebra, editor, *Youth, Socialization, and Mental Health* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), p. 198.
9 Op. cit., xiv.
10 Michael H. Bond and Peter W.H. Lee, "Face Saving in Chinese Culture: A Discussion and Experimental Study of Hong Kong Students," a working paper of the Social Research Centre, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, January 1978, p. 7.
11 Op. cit. See also Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).
12 Cf. Jinn-Inn Teoh, "An Analysis of Completed Suicides by Psychological Post-Mortem," *Annals Academy of Medicine*, III (April, 1974), p. 123.
13 Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York, Harper and Row, 1950).
14 Op. cit., p. 137.
15 Op. cit., p. 28.
16 Op. cit., pp. 55, 59.
17 Op. cit., p. 123.
18 Stephen H.K. Yeh, "Love and Courtship Among Singapore Chinese: A Study in Social Change," *South-East Asia Journal of Sociology*, I, (May, 1968), p. 34.
19 Quoted by Jacob S. Quiambao, *The Asian Family in a Changing Society* (Manila: East Asia Christian Conference, 1965), p. 18.
20 Cf. Carl T. Smith, "The Protestant Church and the Improvement of Women's Status in 19th Century China," *Ching Feng: Quarterly Notes on Christianity and Chinese Religion and Culture*, XX (1977), pp. 19-115.
21 Op. cit., p. 230.
22 Cf. Hsu, op. cit., p. 230
23 Ibid., p. 235.
24 Ibid., p. 238.
25 Ibid., p. 147.
26 Paul Clasper, "Christian Spirituality and the Chinese Context," *Ching Feng*, p. 16.

III. CASE STUDIES

A Chinese woman in Singapore tells a marriage counselor that her husband has been put under a spell by another woman. The other woman is a bar hostess whom the husband met in a casual contact after work at a bar. She put him under her spell by making a powder of ashes from burning a sanitary napkin which contained her menstrual flow, and putting the ashes in a cup of tea which she gave him to drink. The husband is now under her uncontrollable influence.[1]

To be confronted by such a situation is not surprising in Singapore. Surrounded by a culture in which folk religions abound with spirits, fortune tellers, and mediums; where horoscopes are regularly consulted; and where communication with gods or ancestors is available for a fee, counseling takes on a special complexion. Obviously, the approaches learned in the West need some careful modification to be useful in the East.

Of course, many Chinese in Singapore are as sophisticated as their counterparts in any other part of the world, and folk religion has no more hold on their lives than it does on the average American's. The point is that any counseling approach needs to take into account the unique cultural setting in which the interpersonal problem exists. The bias of the counseling world has been to look for the forces in personality structure that operate to create personal problems, while it ignores cultural factors.

While psychodynamic factors are important in understanding interpersonal problems, they are only one way of approaching the problem, and not necessarily the most important way. The psychological bias, helpful though it may be, needs to be corrected by socio-cultural factors. For example, counseling with Vietnamese in the United States calls for an appreciation of how real the cultural factors are. Counselors working with Vietnamese are impressed by their depression, passivity, and their lack of expression of hostility or any kind of negative feelings. One common explanation is that they are suffering from unresolved problems that date back to childhood. Such an explanation may have validity in some cases of severe depression, but to assign the Vietnamese refugee to such a category is to overlook the actual social situation. The typical refugee is lonely, homesick, separated from most psychological supports, and set apart by language. Moreover, many have already discovered racism in the United States; they have begun to realize that they are likely to be passed over in favor of Caucasians, that the American Dream is for white Americans only. Their depression has little to do with their childhood; it has a great deal to do with their inability to cope with a relentless, present-day reality. Any therapeutic approach which ignores the strangeness and the prejudice the Vietnamese is encountering is bound to fail.

In marriage counseling, the mingling of cultural and psychodynamic forces is particularly conspicuous. Below are presented four cases in which cultural factors activate personal problems in the lives of the marriage partners.

A Nisei husband took his Italian bride to live in a house with his parents. The Italian bride could not accept this living arrangement and when her husband refused to ask his parents to leave, she moved out. Since the husband had already risked rejection by having married outside of his own Japanese culture, his bride's action intensified

his personal conflict. He felt caught between a deep sense of filial duty toward his parents and not wanting to lose his bride. Wanting to please both his parents and his wife, he found himself pleasing none of them.[1]

In this case, cultural and dynamic factors are thoroughly interwoven. The wife's action was triggered by the new joint living arrangement, but her antagonism was really directed toward her own parents. The customary cultural pattern of Italian women is to show deference to their husband's people. However, this woman's defiance of her own parents' authority was so great that it was transferred to her parents-in-law, where it was intensified by strangeness. Eventually the husband was helped to understand some of his own needs that led him to marry an Occidental. In a compromise solution he established his parents with another relative and then was able to provide a private home for his bride. The emotional needs of both wife and husband had been activated by special cultural pressures.

The second case is of a Chinese couple in Hong Kong.

An American-born Chinese woman met a Hong Kong-born Chinese man in a Crusade for Christ on the campus of a university in the United States. She was an intelligent, verbal person, very much in touch with her feelings, and able to give herself in warm, affectionate ways. He was also able intellectually, but was restrained in emotional expression and was driven by a keen sense of obligation to his parents who had sacrificed to make his education in the West possible. They were married in the United States and remained there until he had completed his course of study at the university. On their return to Hong Kong they established their own home and had children, two girls, in rapid succession. The husband immersed himself in his father's business, putting in a sixty-hour work week, and having little time left for his wife and daughters. When his wife objected to the lack of attention the children were receiving from their father, the husband simply said that he owed it to his father to work hard in the family business and that he had no other choice in the matter.

In counseling with a minister in Hong Kong, this wife ventilated freely the anger that she felt toward her mother-in-law who was so disappointed in having no grandsons that she would not even visit her granddaughters. She talked of her husband's failure to live up to the biblical prescription that a man should leave his parents and cleave to his wife. She was angry over needing to make all the decisions regarding the children, and she was hurt over her husband's neglect both of herself and the children. His lack of involvement in the emotional development of the children was a major disappointment to her. His working sixty hours each week seemed utterly unrealistic to her.

He, in turn, talked of his sense of being trapped in a controversy between his mother and his wife. He felt torn at several levels: between being a good husband and a good son; between the demands of the biblical faith as a husband and the demands of family loyalty as a son; between the desire to participate in the children's upbringing and his sense of duty to his father's business; between responsiveness to his heavenly Father and attention to his human father. He declared that he was unable to sense God's presence in his life, and was deeply disturbed over this.

In this case, cultural pressures were strong. The sixty-hour week turned out to be quite common in Hong Kong, especially among sons whose education overseas had been financed by their parents. The disappointment of the husband's mother over the wife's failure to produce a son could be understood only in light of the special meaning in Chinese culture of the son, who carries on the family name and hence preserves the ties of kinship. The deep involvement of both wife and husband in the Christian community made it essential that solutions to their problems be found within the context of their faith.

The resolution of the problem, however, came through a clearer appreciation of the husband's needs. Employing a Gestalt technique, the pastoral counselor had the husband "talk" both with his father and with God. Through this device the husband began to realize that the demands for working long hours were not being made by his parents, but were really of his own making. His hidden fears were of giving up his Chinese identity; he was struggling with a sense of losing his culture. It became clear to him that what God was asking of him was more important than clinging to cultural patterns of filial loyalty. Thus he was able to give more of himself to his family and hence feel more reconciled with God. His change of behavior made it possible for his wife to be more accepting of her mother-in-law's disappointment.

The third case is of a somewhat similar Chinese couple in Hong Kong, but the key to problem was the attitude of the wife.

The wife was an American-born Chinese married to a Chinese born in Hong Kong. They were married in the United States as they both were completing their college work, and they settled in their own flat in Hong Kong. He went to work in his father's firm, conforming to the expected role of the filial son. His parents were quite accepting of his wife and did not intrude unduly into their private life. The real point of tension came over their children's education. The husband wanted his children to be entered into the Cantonese-speaking school which was traditionally Chinese in a quite rigid pattern. She, on the other hand, wanted her children to be brought up in English-speaking schools where they would have a chance to become citizens of the world rather than rigidly Chinese. She saw one solution to the problem in leaving Hong Kong and returning to the United States, but he felt he needed to stay, at least for a while, to please his parents.

In talking with a pastoral counselor, she told of the difficulty she had experienced in trying to adjust to life in Hong Kong. Because she could not speak Cantonese, she felt excluded from much of the common life of the community. She found Hong Kong to have an artificial culture where people were judged in terms of material possessions and where appearances counted for a lot. She said she was used to the freedom of the United States where people had accepted her for what she was, contrary to what she was experiencing in Hong Kong.

These obvious cultural pressures were compounded by some other needs in the woman's life. Her mother had come out of a deprived background where she had had to fight for status in her life. The wife had now taken on a similar posture and felt a strong need to succeed, to be the very best. This need was carried over into her attutide toward her children. It was inconceivable to her that her children should be handicapped in any way by an education that could possibly limit their chances for success in the world. Once again, as in the first

two cases, the pressures at work in this family problem were both cultural and dynamic.

The fourth case is a Chinese couple with Filipino and Malaysian backgrounds.

> A Chinese woman in the Philippines married a Chinese man from Malaysia while they were both attending seminary in the Philippines, she in music and he in theology. The husband took his bride to live in Malaysia, in a household that included his younger brother. His sister, who lived nearby, often visited, talking in Malay and thereby excluding the wife. The presence of the brother and sister became a major source of tension.
>
> Two daughters were born to the couple, but the wife's unhappiness continued to mount. She took her daughters for a visit with her mother in the Philippines, but because her mother was not a Christian, she did not feel free to share her unhappiness with her.
>
> At the end of seven years of marriage, the couple was living together in a kind of armed truce. They declared that they hated each other but were staying together because of the children and because a divorce would end the husband's career as a pastor. The wife expressed her dissatisfaction with the marriage in terms of resenting the intrusion of her husband's brother and sister, and in wanting more emotional response from her husband of the kind she was used to in her homeland. He, in turn, complained that his wife threatened his autonomy at home by wanting an un-Chinese-like say in how family life was to be lived.

Clearly, cultural factors were present in this situation, including the wife's separation from her mother by reason of her religion. Some equally significant personal needs, however, intensified the situation. The wife's warmhearted father had died when she was eleven, and without realizing it she had been expecting her husband to be like him and, indeed, replace him in openly affectionate ways. He, in turn, was threatened in his pastoral work by a strong lay leader, and found the combination of threats to his autonomy both at work and in the home overpowering. Once again, personal needs were activated by the social situation.

As these cases illustrate, there are a number of special cultural factors operating in the East that need to be considered in doing marriage counseling. I would like to discuss several of these factors, using additional case material.

Interdependence vs. Individualism

When Chinese American scholar Francis Hsu wrote his book, *Americans and Chinese: Reflections on Two Cultures and Their People,* he used the contrast between Eastern interdependence and Western individualism as his major premise. Identifying himself as an American, Hsu writes: "I frankly see the root of our problems today as a crisis of interpersonal relationships due to runaway individualism."[2]

Most counseling in the West aims at getting the individual to mobilize his or her resources to cope with situational problems. Even though family therapy is assuming greater prominence in therapeutic circles, and group approaches have demonstrated their effectiveness in many places, the emphasis remains on the one-to-one approach, with collaborative efforts aimed at helping the counselee to cope. This approach is generally alien to the ways of the East. In patterns reminiscent of Old Testament days, life in the East is lived within a web of interdependent interpersonal relationships. It is thus natural for counseling efforts to involve the entire community. Consider, for example, the following case:

> An unmarried Malaysian woman who was a Christian became pregnant by a Muslim man. For the sake of the unborn child, she went to the Muslim Court and registered her marriage. She then felt sharp conflict over a betrayal of her Christian faith, yet wanted to remain related to her lover. She knew that if she were to renounce the Muslim faith, she could easily precipitate a riot between the predominantly Muslim community and the minority Christian congregation.

In a Western setting this woman's problems would probably be considered largeley in terms of her own ability to handle the unwanted pregnancy, with a consideration of the possible options she had. The matter would be dealt with in terms of her attitudes and ego strength. It is likely that the inter-faith problems would be given little significance.

In the Eastern setting, in which this case occurred, the extended family and the entire Christian congregation played major roles. The pregnant woman confided in a close friend at her place of work. The friend went to the pastor of the local Christian congregation and informed him of the situation. The pastor arranged for the friend to invite the woman's brother to her home, to inform him of the facts, and to suggest that both a Muslim wedding and a Christian service in the bride's home could be arranged. On hearing of his sister's pregnancy by a Muslim, the brother reacted violently. The friend encouraged the expression of anger and frustration over a two-hour period, then encouraged him to inform the family of the situation and of the plan to marry openly. The family asked the brother to let the entire extended family know of the circumstances. This he did, in a very heated session with several members of the larger family threatening to kill his sister. The only member of the family who seemed understanding of the problem was a grandmother. The brother, supported by the grandmother, absorbed the hostility of the family. He and the sister's friend prayed together often during those difficult days.

Two months later a wedding was held according to Muslim rites, followed by a service held by the Christian congregation in the home of the bride. The bride's friend provided strong support for her, encouraging her not to cry (i.e., not to lose face). A relative gave a talk in which he pointed out that although everything had started out in the wrong way, the family had stood by the bride, and things could work out for the future. No formal counseling had taken place, but a whole community had been mobilized to resolve the problem. The solution was found within the context of the community.

Even though community involvement tends to be characteristic in the Chinese culture, there are some situations where a counselee may specifically

request a one-to-one approach in order not to involve other members of the family. Such cases are likely to be found where Western attitudes have been adopted and counseling itself has been accepted as a legitimate activity.

Mother-in-Law

A second problem area is the relationship between a wife and her mother-in-law, which is of particular significance in the Chinese culture. The case that follows is of a Chinese couple in Singapore.

> The wife, in her early thirties, was a well-educated woman whose education had been exclusively in the English stream (i.e., in English-speaking schools). Although Chinese in background, many of her attitudes were quite Western. In counseling she was extremely critical of her husband's submission to his mother, of her mother-in-law's constant criticism of how she was bringing up her children, and, indeed, of what she saw as her mother-in-law's high-handed interference in her disciplining of her children. She was angry that her husband seemed unwilling to protect her from his mother's verbal abuse.

The wife's attitude was strongly colored by her Western orientation. She saw her husband as being overly dependent on his mother, as needing to "grow up" and "cut the apron strings," and to affirm the primary character of his relationship with her as her husband. In these attitudes she was reflecting a Western bias which sees marriage as the turning point at which two people move out of their parents' homes, literally and psychologically, and establish an independent family unit no longer tied emotionally to the original families.

But in Singapore the relationship with parents is of quite a different sort. Marriage in the typical Chinese culture does not mean that a man leaves his parents. On the contrary, it means that he brings his wife into the family structure, maintaining a primary relationship with his mother. It is the wife's responsibility to fit, submissively, into this structure and to be obedient to her mother-in-law in every detail. Accommodating herself to her mother-in-law, the Chinese wife looks forward to the day when she will have a son who, in turn, will give her the same priority treatment that her husband now gives his mother.

The husband's relationship with his mother is thus much more involved, and "cutting the apron strings" is too simplistic a term to use in that context. The whole system of family relationships, which has provided stability for the Chinese culture for four centuries or more, is at stake. To overlook the cultural significance of the mother-son relationship is to miss the heart of the issue.

This case illustrates the dilemma faced by many Chinese women whose educational advantages and career opportunities have led them into direct conflict with deeply-rooted cultural patterns. The pastoral counselor in this case reports that his goal was to help this couple "ventilate and drain off large accumulations of anger, to begin to look together at the reality factor in their role conflicts, and to explore possible compromise measures,"[3] but he acknowledges the difficulty in achieving such a goal. The couple is caught between two value systems, each of which sets up a strong bias and must be taken into consideration.

I might note parenthetically that the housing situation in Singapore adds another pressure to marriage. Even where couples would like to begin marriage in their own home, the acute housing shortage makes this difficult. Two pastors estimated that 50 percent of the couples they marry (the average marrying age in Singapore being 28 for men and 24 for women) move into their parents' homes for the first two or three years of married life until their combined income can make it possible to secure a home of their own, or until they are allotted an apartment in a high-rise. Although this situation is congruent with the Chinese patriarchal family pattern of the past, it obviously creates tension, especially among young Western-oriented brides.

Sex

Another area in which cultural attitudes play a major role is sex. In Western marriage counseling, discussion of sexual attitudes and behavior is an accepted part of the process. Among Chinese educated in Western patterns, relatively little difference is shown in this area although, as is always true in counseling, an atmosphere of trust is essential. Among older Chinese, however, and especially among those educated in the Chinese language, there is considerably more reticence in any discussion of sex. One social worker in Singapore told me that although she has no personal problem in bringing up sexual concerns, she finds it awkward to find suitable words to use in Chinese dialects since most of the words are the coarse language of the street. She finds it easier to talk about sex in English.

In some respects the reticence in discussing sex is unexpected since the basic attitude toward sex tends to be more open in the East then in the West. Sex is not set apart as something special, as it tends to be in the West, but is seen as a natural part of the wholeness of living. Children, who often live in crowded quarters, especially in large cities like Singapore and Hong Kong, grow up surrounded by sexual activity. Sex is not a tabu area and the kinds of evasions or falsehoods about sex that many Westerners encounter as children are relatively unknown in the East. David and Vera Mace, for example, tell of the public announcement made in a village in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) when an adolescent girl has her first menstrual period. The beating of the great *raban*, a huge, round drum, by the women of the family, tells the whole village that the girl is now a woman.[4]

The openness in dealing with sex with children within the family does not, however, extend into marriage. A lack of communication between a couple regarding the adequacy of sexual adjustment is almost characteristic of the Chinese culture. One Chinese gynecologist told me that Asian men will not discuss sex. She said that for a woman to bring

up sex for discussion with her husband is unthinkable. He will see her as "loose" or as being a prostitute, or as carrying on an affair without his knowledge. She believes there is a complete breakdown in communication over sex.

Another Chinese doctor declared that in her opinion 90 percent of the women in Singapore do not experience orgasm in sexual intercourse. (Masters and Johnson put the figure at 50 percent in the U.S.) When I asked marriage counselors in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan about this figure, they questioned the accuracy of the statistic but noted that the problem is a real one.

One marriage counselor described the typical Chinese attitude toward sex as being like the Victorian era when sex was not talked about but was lived out. Chinese women, he believes, do not have the same high expectations about sexual gratification that Western women have, and their attitudes about their husbands' involvement with prostitutes is much more tolerant than that of Western wives.

Infidelity

In discussing marriage problems with counselors in Taiwan, I found there was general agreement that a major issue is the common practice of the husband having a girlfriend on the side. To be sure, infidelity is found in many American marriages, but it does not have the same kind of cultural acquiescence that is common in the East. It is the cultural heritage growing out of the "second wife" custom that intensifies the issue in Taiwan.

The idea of a second wife is a byproduct of the patriarchal family in which carrying on the family line through the son is so crucial. When no male heir has resulted from a marriage, it was accepted practice for the husband to take a second wife, with the hope that she could provide a son. The second wife, in the classical Chinese family structure, took her place in the household along with the first wife, but she never supplanted the first wife. Everyone understood that she played a secondary role, but it was a crucial one for the continuation of the family line and a guarantee that there would be a son to take care of parents in their old age.

The custom of having a second wife was given further support throughout Southeast Asia when many Chinese males left mainland China to work for some years, always hoping to return. The long absences from home and wife led to the establishing of second households in places like Singapore and Hong Kong, with the culture supporting the practice. In Singapore today there are still many families with more than one wife, even though the Woman's Charter of 1961 outlawed marriage to more than one wife for all except Muslims. In a study made of teenage girls in 1965, an average of ten per cent of the girls reported that their fathers had several wives.[5] One wife in Singapore reported that her husband had two girl friends with whom he sleeps. It is a major problem to her, but her sister says to ignore it. Her husband's father had more than one wife. His older brother has four wives. He says to her, "If my brother's wife puts up with it, why can't you?"

Keeping a second wife has been a status symbol for many; it is evidence of affluence. In Taiwan today, even though the practice is illegal, many business men take as second wives talented college graduates who like to marry older men who have already prospered in business. Such women may help a successful man to be even more successful.

The practice of having more than one wife is disappearing, but the heritage of an intimate relationship with more than one woman continues. Thus, for example, in Taiwan today it is common practice in high business circles for visiting businessmen to be provided not only with a hotel room, but also with a woman. One Christian pastor reported to me how much pressure members of his congregation feel, how they will "lose face" with their business colleagues, if they do not accept the services of the woman provided. Another pastor tells of a woman parishioner who wants her husband to take a mistress and have her live with them since she cannot bear any children. Her question to her pastor is, "Would this be committing a sin as a Christian?" Anthropologist Maurice Freedman notes the prevalence of prostitution in the East and quotes "a typical remark of a young, modern-minded male: 'My wife doesn't mind at all if I go occasionally to a brothel, but she would be very angry if I kept another woman.' "[6]

Infidelity in the East has a different meaning from infidelity in the West. David and Vera Mace conclude their discussion by saying, "A man in the East does not, therefore, wrong his wife by having sex relations with another woman."[7] In a similar vein, Professor Hsu notes the difference between American and Chinese attitudes: "While a majority of American males and females consider prostitution bad and sinful, most Chinese in pre-1949 and in Taiwan today see it as part of the order of nature, or at worst as an unavoidable defect of that order."[8]

I am not interested in passing judgment on a cultural heritage that traditionally has provided support for a double standard of sexual morality. Rather, I would point out that the pattern of accepting mistresses is a part of a cultural heritage that cannot be ignored in marriage counseling. The Westerner has only to compare the divorce rates of the West with those of the East to lose any feeling of smug superiority. In spite of the prevalence of prostitution, the Eastern practice of arranged marriages has made for a stability in the social unit of the family which is to a large degree unknown in the West.

Adoption

Another issue of cultural significance found quite often in Chinese families but virtually unknown in the West is the practice of adopting out some of the children of large families. When the resources of

the family are too limited to provide for basic needs, or even when the resources are not great enough to provide educational and social opportunities, one or more members of the family may be adopted out. Although the extended family makes being adopted out a relatively non-traumatic event, especially when the adoptive parents may be relatives, it is nevertheless true that a noticeable number of persons with problems in relationships turn out to be children who were adopted out at an early age.

One such person was a woman who was given away early in her life and brought up by an adoptive mother. Now married, with a daughter of her own, she is in continual conflict with her mother-in-law who has cared for her daughter a good deal during periods of separation from her husband. It is likely that some of the conflict is a result of her effort to avoid having her daughter experience the same kind of emotional loss that she knew in being separated from *her* mother.

One counselor reported on a young Chinese man doing his National Service in the army, who had had a history of mental illness and who was thrown into a deep depression by a breakup with his girlfriend. He declared that she was all he had. Throughout his therapy the fear of rejection was a dominant theme. At an early age he had been adopted, along with a sister, by a business associate of his father, a woman who had adequate means to provide a good life for the children.

It is of interest that in this case the adoptive mother of the young man became his father's second wife. It is my impression that a disproportionate number of children of second wives have emotional problems similar to those found in adoptive children. In studying case records of problem marriages, I was impressed with how often a person in trouble turned out to be the child of a second wife. The Singapore *Straits Times* reported on a bizarre murder case where a woman who murdered her lover's wife was the daughter of a second wife.[9] A Chinese pastor tells of a manipulative church worker who was creating massive problems in the parish; he was the son of a second wife. Notable in this case was the fact that this man's father had never shown any regard for him.

Under a Spell

This discussion began with the case of a woman who believed that her husband had been put under a spell. I want to conclude with the case of a woman who believed she had been put under a charm.

> Ting Jin was a 24-year-old Chinese woman from a very traditional Chinese family. Her education had all been in Chinese. She spoke some English, but with difficulty. She was nominally Christian (Protestant). She had been married for four years to Stephen Wee, a 25-year-old businessman who held a responsible executive position in a large international organization. Stephen was proud of his "Straits" Chinese culture and enjoyed cooking some of the particular dishes of that sub-culture. He was the second son in a family of six children where conversation was carried on in a Chinese dialect, but one entirely different from the dialect spoken in his wife's family home. He was a Roman Catholic, having been educated entirely in English in a Catholic school, to which he felt a strong loyalty.
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> Stephen courted Ting Jin in a Western style, taking her often on outings with friends. She seemed happy in this period and was responsive although quiet. Her problems with English made her uncomfortable although Stephen and his friends made real efforts at including her. Stephen himself tried to learn her family dialect but was never really proficient in it. Because of the mixture of backgrounds, the language most commonly used when members of either family were present was English.
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> Two years after they were married their only child was born, a daughter called Weng Siu. Ting Jin was bitterly disappointed in not having a son and was not well for several weeks. She was convinced that someone had put a charm on her and had caused her not to have a boy. Stephen tried to be understanding with her and eventually she did learn to love her daughter. By the time Weng Siu was several months old, the three of them were quite happy together. Although Ting Jin had worked as a secretarial assistant prior to her pregnancy, and had planned to leave her baby in the care of an amah and resume working, she had not gone back to work by the time her daughter was two years old.
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> With the coming of the baby, Ting Jin showed less and less interest either in Stephen's friends or his family. She went often to visit her mother for the day where usually her sister and the sister's two children, a boy and girl, were also present. Because the mother recognized a growing discontent and a visible unhappiness, she suggested to Stephen that Ting Jin spend a holiday season with her. Stephen agreed to this plan, and Ting Jin seemed blissfully happy in the bosom of her original family. Stephen visited her often, but after six weeks wanted her to return to their home. She was willing to do so, but made frequent visits for the day with her mother. She was unwilling, however, to visit with her mother-in-law, and when Stephen's parents visited in her home, she was withdrawn and quiet.
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> When they had been married about four years, Stephen became attracted to a fellow-worker, a woman who had always been friendly at his office. She was about 20, English-educated from a strict Chinese family. The relationship which began by sharing lunch together escalated rapidly, although neither of them really wanted it to, and both of them felt guilty over erotic feelings toward each other. At the time they sought help, there had been no overt expression of their feeling for each other except for an occasional light kiss. Stephen told the counselor that he felt he was committing a "mortal sin" by feeling a sexual attraction to a woman who was not his wife. He said he knew that Ting Jin would be very jealous and would never forgive him if she knew anything of his feelings. "She would take a chopper to me," he said. Nevertheless, he continued to seek out his co-worker because, he said, she was so open with him, talked so freely with him, and was so interested in all that concerned him. A male colleague to whom he confided told him that to have an affair with the girl would be all right, that "every man does it." He felt he could not go to confession any more, that the priest "wouldn't know how to help."

The counselor, in this case a woman from the West, recognizes how hard it is for her to see this situation through the Eastern eyes of Ting Jin and Stephen. Clearly, the situation is complicated by the mixture of cultures in Singapore, where even Stephen's name had been given to him by his English-speaking teachers. The closeness of the Chinese family is represented in this case, but the usual affiliation of the wife with her mother-in law has not formed, which is certainly causing problems. The significance of not having a male heir to carry on the family line is demonstrated by Ting Jin's

disappointment over having only a daughter. The carryover into a Christian family of non-Christian attitudes toward spirits and charms is seen in Ting Jin's assigning the responsibility for giving birth to a girl to a charm. The conflict between Christian standards of fidelity in marriage and the classical double standard for the Chinese male is accented in this case. At the time of this writing the outcome of this case is uncertain, but it is clear that no final resolution can come without taking seriously the cultural pressures which exert so much influence on this couple.

As has been true in so many of the cases cited, the cultural situation is complicated by dynamic factors. For the woman to blame the failure to produce a son on a charm is one way of avoiding a confrontation with reality. The gradual retreat from the struggles in her own home to the security of her original family suggests the same refusal to face the real world in a responsible, adult manner. And the inability of the husband to deal openly with the growing gulf between himself and his wife suggests that he, too, is caught up in immaturities.

NOTES

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4 David and Vera Mace, *Marriage: East and West* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960), p. 297.
5 *Teen-Age Girls' Family Problems in Singapore*, by the Child Welfare and Social Work Section, Maris Stella Girls' School (Singapore: Moore, 1965).
6 Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Family and Marriage in Singapore* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957), p. 57.
7 Op. cit., p. 41.
8 Op. cit., p. 140.
9 "The Mimi Wong Case," Singapore *Straits Times*, February 26, 1978, p. 11.